COMMANDER'S HATCH

FOCUSED DISPATCH — Digitization of the Mounted Forces

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The Army is moving rapidly to design the digitized fighting force of the 21st Century. Fort Knox is leading this effort at brigade and below through advanced warfighting experiments (AWE), where soldiers use advanced technology to conduct tactical operations. The driving factor in using digitization is the ability to move information around the battlefield quickly and accurately to increase the operational tempo and to make our combat systems more lethal and survivable during combat.

During August, 1995, the Mounted Battle Lab conducted its second live advanced warfighting experiment at the Western Kentucky Training Area, a Kentucky National Guard training site at Greenville, approximately one hundred miles west of Fort Knox. This experiment, Focused Dispatch, was a follow-on to AWE 94-07, Desert Hammer, the first such experiment, conducted at the NTC in April, 1994.

During Desert Hammer, a fully digitized battalion task force was fielded using information-age capabilities applied to an existing organization and current doctrine, training, tactics, techniques, and procedures against the Opposing Force (OPFOR). The results of this AWE gave the entire Army a glimpse of the future. It also indicated that digitized operations can enhance lethality, survivability, and tempo.

Desert Hammer established the baseline from which alternative combat functions could be developed and compared for all future mounted warfighting experiments. While Desert Hammer showed the great potential of digitization, the experiment also indicated that more work was necessary to show how digitization could enhance battlefield capabilities. Focused Dispatch was necessary to pursue further enhancements of the digitized force.

The ultimate goal of Focused Dispatch is to rewrite the digital tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) for the future digital battlefield. This is needed to make the best use of digital technology. We believe that the analysis of the results from Focused Dispatch will show even greater enhancements in lethality, survivability, and tempo than were seen in Desert Hammer. While the final analysis has not been completed, observations during the experiment suggest that changes in organization, doctrine, and training allowed the experimental unit to capitalize on and maximize information age capabilities.

While Focused Dispatch concentrated on fires, intelligence, logistics, and battle command as the primary points of emphasis. Aviation, air defense, mobility, countermobility, and survivability issues were also included to ensure a combined arms approach.

The operational hypothesis for Focused Dispatch was simple: *"if procedural, functional, and organizational changes in fires, intelligence, logistics, and battle command are implemented as a result of digital connectivity, then even greater enhancements [than those observed in Desert Hammer] in lethality, survivability, and tempo will result."* If proven to be true, this hypothesis will provide critical training and operational insights necessary to refine the concepts of how future mounted forces should fight.

To gain insights into the key battlefield operating systems that must be integrated on the battlefield, Focused Dispatch keyed on changes in the organization, doctrine, and TTP necessary to optimize the potential of digital system connectivity, information flow, and improved communications. These experiments employed constructive, virtual, and live combat simulations to measure small unit effectiveness, digitized training support packages, and doctrine/TTP for digitized forces.

During Focused Dispatch, there were three constructive (JANUS) experiments, one virtual (SIMNET) experiment, and one, linked virtual/live field experiment. Prior to the virtual/live experiment, the results of the constructive and virtual experiments served to refine the alternative functions and processes to be used during the final operational field phase.

During all phases of the experiment, several technologies were explored to determine their impact on the digitized force. These included the Wide Area Munitions Intelligent Minefield, the Hand Launched Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, The Global Positioning System, the All Source Analysis System Workstation, and the Movement Tracking System. In retrospect, these technologies likely will change the TTP for the future mounted force because of the significant capabilities they will provide. Simply stated, these capabilities will enable commanders to make better decisions by providing them with better information.

Task Force 2-33 Armor was the experimental unit throughout Focused Dispatch. The unit received extensive training in both conventional and digital operations in live, virtual, and constructive simulations before beginning the live/virtual portion of the experiment at the Greenville training site.

The live portion of the experiment was conducted at Greenville by B Company, 2-33 Armor operating as the Blue Force and 1-123 Armor of the Kentucky Army National Guard as the OPFOR. The task force commander operated from a battle command vehi-

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cle (BCV) in concert with a command and control vehicle (C^2V) which served as the tactical operations center. The live forces at Greenville were linked by sophisticated communication devices to the other three organic company teams operating from SIMNET simulators at Fort Knox. Thus, the entire battalion task force could be fought at once even though only one company team was operating in an actual field environment.

In addition, an air defense artillery platoon from Fort Bliss, Texas and an Apache attack helicopter battalion from Fort Rucker, Alabama were integrated into the fight through virtual simulation. This virtual/live linkage was made possible by the Army Space Command Vehicular Data Communication and Positional Awareness Demonstration System which allowed live forces to interact with simulated forces in a near-seamless way.

This construct allowed the Mounted Battle Lab to experiment with digital TTP across the battlefield operating systems without the cost associated with placing an entire battalion task force in the field.

If Desert Hammer gave the Army a glimpse of the future, Focused Dispatch provided a picture window. Focused Dispatch was the critical next step along the path toward digital operations in the 21st Century.

Although the final analysis is not yet completed, emerging insights suggest that existing digital TTP can be revised for use by the EXFOR during the TF XXI brigade level AWE at the NTC in Feb 97. In addition, Focused Dispatch may provide important information on how to improve digital fire support, intelligence, and combat service support.

Clearly, Focused Dispatch was a successful experiment. It established the criteria for effectively integrating technologies, processes, organizations, and systems for all future warfighting experiments. In that regard, Focused Dispatch helped set the conditions for the success of the EXFOR. More importantly, Focused Dispatch may have set the conditions necessary to ensure that future American soldiers will be able to fight and win on any battlefield against any enemy and under any condition. ON THE WAY!